

What Is A Good Marriage Match?

International Bible Lessons

Ruth 4:1-10

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“I have also acquired Ruth the Moabite, the wife of Mahlon, to be my wife, to maintain the dead man’s name on his inheritance, in order that the name of the dead may not be cut off from his kindred and from the gate of his native place; today you are witnesses” (Ruth 4:10—NRSV).

“Also Ruth the Moabite, the widow of Mahlon, I have bought to be my wife, to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance, that the name of the dead may not be cut off from among his brothers and from the gate of his native place. You are witnesses this day” (Ruth 4:10—ESV).

“Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place: ye are witnesses this day” (Ruth 4:10—KJV).

In the early days of Israel, the law required that the name and inheritance of a married man who died before he had a child would be carried on by the child of his widowed wife after she had married his next-of-kin. Though Ruth was a Moabite, she had married an Israelite, Mahlon, who died before they had children. After committing her life to God and to caring for her widowed mother-in-law, she and Naomi returned to Bethlehem. Among Naomi’s family and friends, Ruth proved her faith, her high moral standards, and her willingness to work hard to care for them both.

Boaz took special notice of Ruth as she worked hard in his field, gleaning barley in order to feed Naomi and herself. In admiration and appreciation, Boaz met her needs beyond her every expectation as she worked. By observing the behavior of Boaz and Ruth, we see how they both followed God’s law to the best of their ability; they loved and tried to help others in need. Through similar acts of devotion to others, they proved to each other that they would be ideally suited as marriage partners. Therefore, Boaz determined to obey the law of God and marry Ruth, the widow of his kinsman. Since Boaz was second to the next-of-kin, he arranged with the next-of-kin to marry Ruth, and they became the great grandparents of King David and ancestors of Jesus Christ. — © Copyright 2011 L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.

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Thinking Further

1. Read Deuteronomy 25:5-10, which describes the Levirate Law (a law regarding marriage for widows and next-of-kin). Why might this law be important in some ancient societies and tribes?

2. Why might the practice of the Levirate Law be less important in contemporary societies today?

3. How might the practice of Levirate Law be disruptive of people’s lives and societies today?

4. Based on his behavior, describe some of the character qualities of Boaz. Why might these qualities make him a suitable husband for Ruth?

5. Based on her behavior, describe some of the character qualities of Ruth. Why might these qualities make her a suitable wife for Boaz?

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